

## **METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION TRANSPORTATION 2035**

### **GENERAL FOCUS GROUP: PARTICIPANTS RECRUITED FROM RANDOM PHONE POLL**

**MAY 13, 2008**

#### **SAN MATEO COUNTY: REDWOOD CITY**

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**Planning for future transportation needs:** The 10 participants in the San Mateo County focus group represented a wide variety of transportation demographics, ranging from residents who drive to a variety of locations for work, stay-at-home parents, and residents who rely almost exclusively on public transportation. This mix of transportation needs and backgrounds made for a lively discussion. When asked to choose a priority for the future, seven participants indicated maintenance of the existing systems, whereas three participants chose building new systems. Although the participants uniformly agreed that maintenance is needed for a majority of Bay area roads and highways, some participants argued that systems were “too far gone” to simply maintain and new systems are needed. Several participants also argued that existing roads and highways are already inadequate for the current population. Additionally, participants mentioned that public transit systems are not well-coordinated across the regions of the Bay area, and additional systems are needed to bridge the current gaps. In comparison, the seven participants who prioritized maintenance argued that it is essential to keep roads and highways usable in the future. Additionally these participants suggested that residents’ current preference for driving will not change in the future, and that there is not sufficient space for the expansion of roads and highways.

<b>Maintain the existing system of roads, and the existing bus, rail and ferry services in the region.</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Build new roads and add more bus, rail and ferry services in the region.</b>	<b>3</b>

The participants’ allocation of the \$30 billion dollar budget reflected this priority of maintenance – 6 participants reported that they would spend up to 50 percent and 4 participants reported that they would spend up to 75 percent of the budget on maintenance.

<b>up to 25% (\$7.5 billion dollars)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>up to 50% (\$15 billion dollars)</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>up to 75% (\$22.5 billion dollars)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>100% (\$30 billion dollars)</b>	<b>0</b>

With the funds that remain from the \$30 billion dollar budget, the participants reported that they would invest in the following: expanding roads and highways (4) and improving public transportation systems and schedules (6).

**Congestion relief:** Similar to other focus groups, the San Mateo County participants felt that traffic congestion would get worse in the future if the entire \$30 billion dollar budget was spent on maintenance projects.

<b>Much better</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Somewhat better</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>No change</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Somewhat worse</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Much worse</b>	<b>4</b>

In plans to relieve traffic congestion, 3 participants prioritized investments in highway systems, 6 prioritized investments in public transit options, and 1 prioritized investments in walking paths and bicycle lanes. The participants who prioritized investments in public transit options argued that residents would take public transit if it were more convenient. These participants considered the current schedules and coverage to be the main barrier to public transit use, rather than residents' preference for driving alone. In contrast, the participants who prioritized investments in highway systems argued that many residents prefer to drive and would not consider public transit.

<b>Highway systems to relieve traffic congestion, including ramp metering, high-occupancy toll lanes, etc.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Public transit options, including rail and buses to provide alternatives to driving.</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Walking paths and bicycle lanes to provide alternatives to driving</b>	<b>1</b>

Shown in the table below are the programs that the participants thought would be most effective in reducing truck volumes along freight corridors. Some of the participants indicated more than one option, so the responses total to more than 10.

<b>Keep trucks out of the peak commuter hours</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Allow smaller trucks to use carpool lanes during congested periods for a fee</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Encourage more cargo deliveries be made by rail or ferries</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Build exclusive truck lanes supported by trucking fees</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Provide more truck parking in commercial business areas</b>	<b>3</b>

**Attitudes toward focused growth:** A majority of the participants were in favor of providing transportation funds to communities that are planning to build more housing along public transit lines; however, two participants were concerned that this system would be unfair to communities that are not developing housing or that are limited in the areas that can be developed.

<b>Funds to communities that are planning to build more housing along BART and other public transit lines</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Funds evenly to communities regardless of where they are planning to build homes</b>	<b>2</b>

**Providing transit access:** Similar to several other focus groups, several of the San Mateo County participants used the fare discussion to emphasize that public transit should be less expensive for all Bay area residents. These participants also suggested that fare structures should be simplified to allow for easier transfers from one transit agency to another. Both transit fares and the cost to park around transit hubs were presented as barriers to residents' use of public transit. Otherwise, a majority of the participants supported updating the transit discount program to one based on household income. The group also argued that transit discounts should also be offered to seniors to encourage them to ride rather than drive. This suggestion was based on the belief that it would be safer for seniors to take public transit than to drive.

**Emissions reduction:** To improve air quality in the Bay area, 6 participants prioritized reducing tailpipe emissions and encouraging alternatives to driving, and 4 participants prioritized reducing traffic congestion and improving traffic flow. The participants who prioritized improving traffic flow emphasized that public transit is not a viable option for many residents, and that traffic flow could be improved by addressing bottlenecks and problem areas on existing highways. The participants who favored encouraging alternatives to driving largely mentioned public transit projects such as providing BART service earlier and later in the day and offering additional shuttles to/from transit stations.

<b>Reducing tailpipe emissions and encouraging alternatives to driving, such as public transit, bicycling, walking, etc.</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Reducing traffic congestion and improving traffic flow to make it easier to drive around the Bay area</b>	<b>4</b>

The participants suggested a variety of transportation programs to reduce automobile emissions, and each suggestion received some support and some opposition from the group. The suggested programs included subsidizing the purchase of more fuel-efficient vehicles, providing education programs to encourage transit use, investing in free fares to encourage residents to try public transit, expanding carpool lanes, and adding speed monitoring cameras to encourage safe driving and reduce traffic congestion caused by accidents.

**Final thoughts on maintenance versus expansion projects:** Following the discussion, 2 participants reported that they would spend less on maintenance and 1 participant reported that she would spend more. Overall, the group spent up to 50 percent or more of the \$30 billion dollar budget on maintenance.

<b>up to 25% (\$7.5 billion dollars)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>up to 50% (\$15 billion dollars)</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>up to 75% (\$22.5 billion dollars)</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>100% (\$30 billion dollars)</b>	<b>1</b>

In addition to maintenance of existing systems, the participants also prioritized the following: expanding public transportation services (6) and reducing fares (2), providing programs to relieve traffic congestion (3), providing transportation funds to communities that develop housing along public transit lines(1), and expanding roads and highways (1).

Similar to several of the other focus groups, the participants were divided on the revenue measures and fees that could be used to raise additional funds for transportation projects. However, a majority of the participants supported an increase in vehicle registration fees.